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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 TEGUCIGALPA 001154

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR WHA/CEN

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TAGS: PGOV KDEM HO

SUBJECT: TFH01: WHA PDAS KELLY'S MEETING WITH PRESIDENT
ZELAYA

REF: TEGUCIGALPA 1138

Classified By: Ambassador Hugo Llorens, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (C) Summary: WHA Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary Craig Kelly met with Honduran President Jose Manuel "Mel" Zelaya and his close advisors during a November 10-11 visit to Honduras to put implementation of the Tegucigalpa/San Jose Agreement back on track. While Zelaya maintained that elections will not be valid and he will call for a boycott unless he is restored, he did concede slightly with regard to the order of events as he sees them unfolding. Much like de facto leader Roberto Micheletti, Zelaya remains isolated and subject to influence from a close circle of advisors who adhere to a hard line. End summary.

¶2. (C) PDAS Kelly and Ambassador Llorens met on November 10 with President Zelaya in the Brazilian Embassy, where he has taken refuge since his surprise return to Honduras on September 21. Accompanying Zelaya in the meeting were a circle of advisors and supporters, most notably his representative on the Verification Commission, Ambassador Jorge Arturo Reina, Reina's son Enrique Reina, First Lady Xiomara Castro, Accord negotiators Victor Meza and Rodil Rivera Rodil, and left-wing activist Padre Andres Tamayo. Also present were Brazilian diplomat Lineu Pupo de Paula and Charge d'Affaires Francisco Catunda.

¶3. (C) Kelly explained that the purpose of his visit was to bring both parties back to the process of implementing the Accord in time to enable Honduras to hold successful elections at the end of the month and bring itself out of the political crisis. Kelly reiterated US support for the Accord and for a restitution of constitutional order.

¶4. (C) Zelaya repeated the same position he had expressed to the Ambassador and DCM earlier the same week (Reftel), that unless he was restored to office, elections would not be legitimate and he would encourage his supporters to boycott the election. He said Micheletti had not been negotiating in good faith, and that Micheletti's proposed "third option," in which both Zelaya and Micheletti resign in favor of a caretaker president until January 2010 was unacceptable and only legitimized the coup. Zelaya added that such political solutions had been harmful to democracy in other Latin American countries, because it instilled a sense of fear in

leaders that they could be removed at any time. Zelaya's circle of advisors echoed this sentiment, insisting the only solution to the crisis was Zelaya's restoration before elections.

¶5. (C) Kelly noted that the process of implementing the Accord was not dead, but in order to make it succeed, it needed to be implemented step by step. He said that if Zelaya would participate in creation of a new unity government, it would change the political dynamic and open the way for Micheletti to resign and Congress to vote on restoration. Kelly stressed that the first step must take place very soon in order for progress to enable successful elections. Kelly noted, however, that even if the implementation had not taken place by election day, a boycott would not help Zelaya's cause. He pointed out that many a legitimate government in Latin America had come to office as a result of elections held under the authority of a government that had taken power in a coup.

¶6. (C) Kelly asked what Zelaya saw as the best way forward, given the circumstances. Zelaya explained that Congress should set a date for his restoration, then declare that there would be a caretaker government until that date. Zelaya said then Micheletti would resign and the caretaker government would ascend to power until Zelaya was restored. Zelaya conceded that he could accept a restoration date that was after elections, so long as Congress voted to set the date before elections.

¶7. (C) Comment: Zelaya's position had not changed since the Ambassador's meeting with him on November 9. He remained

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certain that Micheletti would make every effort to ride out the clock until inauguration day on January 27, and therefore was very untrusting of any gestures from the de facto side. Both Zelaya and Micheletti remain isolated in their respective strongholds, surrounded by advisors who take a hard line. Zelaya did suggest that he was open to Congress establishing the date for his restoration, which might take place after the elections. While Zelaya recognizes his weak negotiating position versus Micheletti, he also knows that the resistance movement is prepared to oppose elections without him if he concedes too much. End Comment.

LLORENS